



**TENNESSEE HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
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November 19, 2004 Board Meeting Minutes
Held at the African American Museum in Chattanooga Tennessee

Commissioners Present:

Commissioner Hammonds
Commissioner Hakeem
Chairman Wiggins
Commissioner Rodriguez
Commissioner Edna Loveday-Rogers

Commissioners Absent:

Commissioner Garrett
Commissioner Pride
Commissioner Kyles
Commissioner Horne
Commissioner Lewis
Commissioner Smith
Commissioner Todd
Commissioner Walker
Commissioner Jones
Commissioner Hodge

Staff Present:

Amber D. Gooding, Executive Director
Antonio Adams, Deputy Director
Scott Mayer, General Counsel
Shay Rose, Assistant Counsel
Robert Bright, Housing Coordinator
Cynthia Howard, Communications Officer
Lisa Lancaster, Director's Assistant
Thierno Bah, Compliance Officer

Guests:

Mr. Eddie Holmes, NAACP
Mr. Lorenzo Benson, THRC
Ms. Zita Pajumae THRC

Call to Order

Chairman Wiggins called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Commissioner Hammonds offered the invocation.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

Minutes of the September 24, 2004 Commission meeting were reviewed and Commissioner Hakeem made a motion to accept, which was seconded by Commissioner Rodriguez.

Announcements

Director Gooding introduced Mr. Lorenzo Benson who has been with the Chattanooga THRC office for 28 years and guest Mr. Eddie Holmes of the Chattanooga NAACP, both were welcomed by the Commissioners.

New Business

Outreach Plan

Communications Officer, Cynthia Howard gave an update on the Outreach and Education efforts of the Commission and thanked the Commissioners for taking time to record the regional radio spots that are being aired across the state. Upcoming events noted were the Fair Housing event and an initiative that will be held in conjunction with the Urban league. Director Gooding also noted that in June of 2005 an Employment Seminar will be hosted by THRC. Details will be shared as they become available. At the close of the board meeting, Ms. Howard will play the recorded commercials for those who would like to hear the completed spots.

Internal Audit

Deputy Director, Antonio Adams explained the process of reviewing and monitoring random cases from each investigator at THRC for accuracy and compliance. Mr. Thierno Bah noted that the areas reviewed and problems identified were: 1.) The Intake process taking too much time resulting in cases aging excessively and, 2.) Documentation included in the case files and the CDS system being incomplete. Management has addressed these issues by implementing new internal control policies to correct the identified deficiencies.

Annual Report

Director Gooding gave an overview of the Annual Report that was prepared by Cynthia Howard who assisted by providing statistical data by Mr. Robert Bright, Housing Coordinator; Mr. Thierno Bah, Compliance Officer and Mr. Antonio Adams, Deputy Director. The report will be distributed to each Legislator and board member when the printing process is complete, around the end of the year. It was noted that many improvements have been made from last years statistics. The improvements were attributed to staff duty changes, increased training and close monitoring of the progress.

Strategic Plan

Executive Director Gooding gave an overview of the Strategic Plan that has been developed by the Agency's management team. The overall goals of THRC were reviewed and problem areas identified in preparation for the plans implementation.

Employment Case Report

Deputy Director Antonio Adams reported on Employment cases and noted that the 608 case closure yearly goals for cases processed was met by the close of the Federal fiscal year on September 30th. Deputy Adams introduced Ms. Zita Pajumae who has been with the Commission for 4 years in the Chattanooga Regional Office.

Housing Case Report

Housing Coordinator, Robert Bright, reported the activity in the area of housing cases. He spoke about cause cases, total inventory of cases for the agency and noted that Race cases are the majority of cases received by the agency. The agency currently has housing cases from 20 counties across the state in its inventory.

Legal Counsel Report

Cause Cases

Assistant Counsel, Shay Rose reported on the status of current cause cases in THRC inventory. There were nine Employment cases caused which include a sexual harassment case, a regarded as disabled worker case and a temporarily disabled (pregnant) worker case. The Housing cause cases include a design construction (disability to access) case, a disability-based case is attempting to be settled, a sexual harassment case and a race based case. Two cases were settled.

With no further business to attend to, Chairman Wiggins called for the board meeting to be adjourned. The meeting was closed at 11:05 am.